

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 14878 071547Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 DHA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /033 W
-----130017 071548Z /53

P R 071508Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9163
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 14878

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG, SHUM
SUBJ: INTERCOMMUNAL FRICTION

REF (A) CAIRO 14757, (B) CAIRO 14314, (C) ALEXANDRIA 960,

1. EMBASSY CONTACTS TELL US THAT THREE CHURCHES, AND POSSIBLY FOUR, HAVE BEEN BURNED IN ACTS OF INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE DURING PAST TWO WEEKS. CHURCHES REPORTEDLY LOCATED IN ASSIUT AND FAYUM (REPORTED PREVIOUSLY) AND UPPER EGYPTIAN TOWN CALLED BESHLE, WHICH WE UNABLE FURTHER IDENTIFY. EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE (COPT) TOLD BY PRIEST OF FOURTH ATTACK, BUT LOCATION WAS NOT SPECIFIED AND THERE MAY BE SOME DOUBE COUNTING.

2. COPTS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY HAVE BEEN ASKED BY HOLY SYNOD TO JOIN FOUR DAY FAST (SEP 6-9). APPEAL TO FAST CONTAINED IN COPTIC JOURNAL, AS WELL AS CHURCH SERMONS, PRESUMABLY IN PROTEST AGAINST BOTH CHURCH ATTACKS AND PROSPOSED ISLAMIC LEGISLATION.

3. ACCORDING OUR INFO, COPTIC REPS MET WITH PM SALIM RECENTLY DISCUSS ISSUE, BUT MEETING BROKE UP WHEN SALIM MAINTAINED PRESENT INAPPROPRIATE TIME ADDRESS SUBJECT. UNCLEAR WHETHER PM REFERRING TO POLITICAL OR RAMADAN CLIMATES. COPS REPORTEDLY SPURNED OFFER OF MEETING WITH VP MUBARAK BUT
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AGREED DISCUSS COMPAINTS WITH ASU SEC GEN MOUSTAFA KHALIL SEPT 6. OUTCOME THIS SESSION UNKNOW BUT PRESS NOTES KHALIL SCHEDULED MEET WITH SADAT SEP 7.

4. COPTIC CONTACTS CONFIRM APOSTATE BILL MAJOR CONCERN, BUT SAY INDIVIDUALS MOST AT RISK NOT THOSE WHO MARRIED MUSLIMS BUT, RATHER, THOSE WHO TEMPORARILY EMBRACED ISLAM TO OBTAIN

EASY DIVORCES FROM CHRISTIAN WIVES. THERE APPARENTLY FAIR
NUMBER SUCH CASES EXISTENT.

5. DURING EMBOFF MEETING WITH AL OFFICIAL ON OTHER BUSINESS
SEP 7, TELEGRAPHIC COMPLAINT TO ARAB LEAGUE ARRIVED FROM US
COPTIC COMMUNITY ON RECENT EVENTS. AL OFFICIAL, WHO USUALLY
WELL INFORMED ON EGYPTIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, CONFIRMED BURNINGS
NOTED ABOVE. HE BLAMED SADAT FOR CURRENT RISE RADICAL
MUSLIM ACTIVITIES, NOTING PRESIDENT HAD ENCOURAGED ISLAMIC
ELEMENTS TO COUNTER LEFTIST PRESENCE ON UNIV CAMPUSES. AL
SOURCE "HOPED" SADAT HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ON THIS PLOY
AS RESULT DISCOVERY TAKFIR AND OTHER FANATIC GROUPS. HE
NOTED THAT SADAT HAD CANCELLED PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED ATTENDANCE
AT RELIGIOUS CEREMONY THIS WEEK AND THOUGHT IT MIGHT INDICATE
CHANGE OF COURSE.

6. IN PASSING, AL SOURCE SAID HE HAS HEARD RUMOR AUTHORITIES
HAVE UNCOVERED RADICAL ARMED COPTIC GROUP IN UPPER EGYPT.
HE HAD NO DETAILS BUT BELIEVED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS DE-
TAINED. (RUMOR POSSIBLY CONNECTED TO GOVT ANNOUNCEMENT IT
HAS SEIZED 3500 WEAPONS DURING PAST TWO MONTHS IN UPPER
EGYPTIAN ANTI-CRIME SWEEPS.)
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